The Southern Vowel Shift

Introduction

• Large-scale contact between dialects can lead to the reallocation of linguistic variants to particular social groups or functions (Trudgill 1996, Britain & Trudgill 2005).
• In Raleigh, NC, 50 years of white collar migration from outside the South has motivated the reallocation of southern vowels to the working classes, weakening the Southern Vowel Shift among white collar speakers.
• Humke & Mailhot (forthcoming) predict that complex linguistic forms are more vulnerable to change.
• Are “complex” elements of the Southern Vowel Shift in Raleigh following a different apparent-time trajectory than “simple” elements?

The Raleigh vowel study

• Focus: vowel change over time, with particular attention to the role of socioeconomic class.
• Conversational interviews with 240 native Raleigh speakers recorded since 2006.
• Rapid change over time in middle class front vowel systems found previously (Dodsworth & Kohn forthcoming).
• 47 white collar speakers are examined here (Table 1).

Which elements are “complex”?

• “Complex” variables are defined here as those that show significant initial effects in generation 1 that are not significant in generation 3.
• Linear mixed effects models:
  - Dependent variables: Lobanov-normalized F1 and F2 (at nucleus)
  - Fixed effects: preceding place, following place, manner, voice, duration, sex, generation
  - Random effect: speaker
• /i/ is conditioned by following place: Fronted variants occur before coronals in generation 1 (Figure 2).
• /æ/ is conditioned by following place: Fronted variants occur before coronals and labials in generation 1 (Figure 3).
• So /i/ and /æ/ are the “complex” variables, while /ɪ/, /ɛ/, and /æ/ are the “simple” variables.

Bibliography